



ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FUNCTION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE AMONG COUNTY GOVERNMENTS: CASE STUDY OF KAKAMEGA COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

Studies indicated that effective change management leads to higher likelihood of achievement of goals by organizations. The human resource is a very important element to any goals that an organization seeks to achieve, and the practices adopted by an organization assist the strategic change implementation process. This study therefore sought to ascertain the role that human resource functions have on implementation of change among county governments with reference to Kakamega County. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to investigate the role of Employee relations practices on change implementation and to investigate the role of employee training on change implementation. The study utilized a case study research design using the simple random sample technique to select the sample. The target population was 3305 respondents that included 106 top management officers, 185 Middle level Management officers, 1000 supervisory staff and 2014 technical and support staff. Data was collected using questionnaires while secondary data was collected from official documents at the County Headquarters. The instruments were tested for reliability using a pilot study to pretest and validate the questionnaires. On the other hand, quantitative data collected was analyzed using SPSS (Version 20) and presented through percentages, means, standard deviations and frequencies. Content analysis data was coded and validated for accuracy then analyzed using descriptive statistics for each objective. The findings revealed that human resource management had significant positive role on the change implementation in Kakamega County.

Key Words: *Employee Relations Practices, Employee Training, Change Implementation, County Governments*

INTRODUCTION

Change has become a necessary way of life for most if not all organizations, and the ability to manage change with minimum resistance is a managerial skill that makes the difference in the innovation competitiveness scale (Schneider *et al.*, 2014). They are increasingly facing challenges associated with globalization, and both internal and external organizational boundaries are being subjected to change as a result of political, economic, social and technological variability, and human resource managers are nowadays being required to play the important role of developing social shock absorbers in organizations facing such factors (Graetz *et al.*, 2010).

Organizational change phenomenon is not units of fixed identities operating on the basis of fixed routines are rather on-going processes that are interwoven with beliefs and habits in which experiences and new reactions are at play (Zimmermann, 2011). Hence organizations have become on-going social processes in which the human resource performance and productivity is central to competitiveness (Markiewicz, 2011). Organizations are faced with a turbulent environment due to factors like the economic crisis, altered demands of clients, and changing demographics (Kuipers *et al.*, 2013). However, Human Resource (HR) Organization have come to realize, over the years, that improving technology and cutting costs, enhance performance only up to a point, and to move beyond that point, human resources provide the all-important connection. Multi-national corporations like Toyota in the end, produce low cost as a result of committed human resource that is working hard to produce the best cars at the lowest possible cost (Kalyani, 2011).

The world is in a state of transformation, and change pervades all economic activities, in which organizations are centrally placed, and they must constantly review their operations to adapt with the environment (Spektor, 2011). This has

brought about the need to innovate constantly and to come up with new products and techniques and to discover new markets to avoid stagnation and low profits, and possible collapse (Johnston, 2011). Many organizations have resorted to organizational change programs such as strategic renewal, outsourcing, privatization, mergers, re-design of processes, quality management and relationships within the organization in order to remain competitive (Cameron *et al.*, 2012).

The study of organizational change implementation has attracted a lot of attention in the developed countries as increasing competition compels organizations to find ways of staying ahead of competition (Denning, 2010). Jaros (2010) argues that in order for organizations to not just survive but prosper, they must be knowledgeable about 'how to implement appropriate organizational changes that will be embraced by their employees' unfortunately, successful organizational change efforts are 'rare', with most failing to fulfill their promise.

Studies have been done that seek to solve various aspects of problems in organizational change implementation, which include those by Cameron *et al.* (2012) that focus on making sense of change management and provide a complete guide to the models, tools and techniques of organizational change. Zimmermann (2011) in a study looks at the dynamics of drivers of organizational change while D'ortenzio (2012) sought to understand change and change management processes, O'Neill (2012) on the other hand was interested in the management of workplace change in the people-based perspective. Other studies that have been done include Cabrey *et al.* (2014) a study that focused on enablers of organizational change through strategic initiatives, and Scandura *et al.* (2012) looked at the leadership & organizational change,

while Hashim (2014) did a comprehensive study of organizational change on General Motors.

There are not as many notable studies in Africa, and more particularly in Kenya, as there have been in the developed world focused on issues of organizational change implementation. Mou (2013) in a case study of Nigerian banking industry sought to identify risks in the change management process; Chaka (2014) in another study of passenger rail agency of South African evaluated the critical factors of change management. Chepkorir (2013) investigated factors affecting management of change in the road agencies in Kenya while Victor (2015) explored the management of change in a design and technology institution in Botswana using the awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement model to identify gaps in the implementation of change using a multi-phase case study as a data collection strategy.

The recent development in HRM finds a theoretical basis in Dave Ulrich's HR role model (1997). He established four roles of HR managers which cover the dimensions strategic/operational focus and people/process oriented (Thill and Venegas *et al.*, 2014). The works of Ulrich *et al.* (2009) also assert that strategic partners and the change agent reflect strategic focus of the HR work. The most important activities of the strategic partner are to align the HR activities to the strategy of the company and to develop a human resource strategy; the activities of the change agent are people oriented and concentrate on the capability of an organization to change (Paracha *et al.*, 2013). The administrative expert and the employee champion are the two roles that compose the operational aspects of the HR activities. The administrative expert ensures the efficient design and delivery of the HR processes (de Guzman *et al.*, 2011). The employee champion on the other hand is concerned with the day-to-day problems

and the needs of the employees (Thill *et al.*, 2014).

More recently, the issue of whether to situate the HRM debate in the organizational or the international context has arisen (Sparrow & Marchington, 2011). This is because organizational responses such as empowerment, work intensification, flexibility and redundancy appear to have gained as much weight as the macro-environmental drivers of HRM such as compensation, labour relations, staffing, economic recession, safety and health and political change (Kidomo, 2004). Kidomo (2004) asserts that not only is HRM an innovative concept that addresses the fundamental question of managing employees in new ways and with new perspective but also a practice that is both located within and meshed with larger framework of the organization's strategy.

In a study on organizational change and human resource management interventions, Adeniji (2013) asserts that when an organization is undergoing change, the role of HRM function is to anchor the change management process and facilitate the transformation across all teams and work dimensions. It is therefore not surprising that in an environment where magnitude of change, its complexity and its frequency are increasing, the human resource persons and leaders have begun to focus their attention on the adoption of change management practices (Choi and Ruana, 2011). As the world is becoming more competitive and volatile, organizations are seeking to gain competitive advantage and turning to more innovative change sources through human resource management interventionist strategies. These strategies have been described as systems that attract, develop, motivate and retain employees to ensure the effective implementation of necessary changes (Adeniji, 2013). This study will look at the role of HRM function in terms of employee relations,

employee training and development, organizational support and performance management.

Kenya promulgated a new constitution in 2013 that created a new structure of governance in the country that included county governments, and the previous administrative units, the local authorities, and all their assets were transformed into departments of the new systems of the county governments (Stephen *et al.*, 2013). However due to unforeseen factors in the nature of politics, social, economic and technological dynamics not every devolution requirements as envisaged by the new constitution have met expectations which has resulted to employees' unrest (Ouko, 2014).

One particular issue that drew a lot of disagreement between the county governments and the central government was the question of rationalization of the human resource factors of the previous constitution and the new constitution (Chaka, 2014). The county governments wanted a clean slate from which to build their human resource requirements, but they had to retain staff of the defunct local authorities, certain staff unions also wanted to remain with the central government although their activities had been devolved, staff that were inherited by the county governments also had entrenched cultures that they wished to maintain despite changed circumstances in which new rules, regulations and functions needed to be implemented. All these factors point to an environment in which the occurrence of change is being felt significantly at various levels of an organization, and that poses a serious challenge to employees as well as to the management in fulfilling expectations of the citizens (Chaka, 2014). Further, Aghere (2015) in a study of change management and its implications for human resource activities noted the following factors for further examination as human resource factors

influencing organizational change, namely employee relations, staff training, and employee commitment.

Kakamega County is a county that substituted the defunct Western Province of Kenya. The county has a population of 1,660,651 and an area of 3,034 square kilometers, the county has nine constituencies namely Malava, Lurambi, Shinyalu, Ikolomani, Khwisero, Butere, Matungu, Mumias and Lugari respectively. The county envisions a competitive and prosperous county offering high quality services in a clean and secure environment, and in particular seeks to improve the welfare of the people through formulation and implementation of all inclusive multi-sectoral policies ([http:// kakamega.go.ke](http://kakamega.go.ke))

Statement of the Problem

A study by Garber (2013) indicates that effective change management leads to higher likelihood of achievement of goals by organizations. However, the transition from the old to new constitution in Kenya presents fear of the unknown, anxiety and apprehension, and hope and enthusiasm on the other hand (Burugu, 2010). Even though the governors of county governments have the task of providing leadership in their respective counties in transitioning the local authorities into county governments, and the human resource to the new paradigm through organizational change implementation, the process of transition has met challenges of resistance from stakeholders which impedes realization of vision 2030 which aims at industrializing Kenya, in order to provide quality life for all its citizens by the year 2030.

Implementing change has been difficult in county governments as evidenced in various studies. In a study on the effects of devolved governance on organizational performance, Mwikali *et al.* (2015) observe that while main objective of county government is to render better and quality services to the residents of Mombasa, the services

have been compromised due to the fear of the unknown over their job security leading to high employee's turnover, absenteeism and low morale, while a study by Kwena (2013) establishes that the use of IFMIS in the ministries in Kenya is affected largely by sabotage and resistance.

On the other hand, Kahari *et al.* (2015) observes that county government stakeholders resisted change since they perceived it as a threat to their jobs, uncertainty of the capacity of the county government to make changes, manage changes and survive while changing and uncertainty on whether county government had instituted strategies to minimize resistance to change. Furthermore, in an employee and work environment satisfaction survey carried out in Kakamega County by Afrique Consult Ltd (2016) there were notable areas of dissatisfaction with pay, benefits, recognition for performance and opportunities for advancement, resolving of disagreements, awareness of important things in other departments, workload and the human resources.

So far, research has focused on factors influencing implementation of change. Such studies include Denning, (2010), Grol *et al.*, (2013), Higgs *et al.*, (2011), and Mou, (2013). There are however few studies Chepkorir (2013), Victor (2013) Omari *et al.*, (2012), Rono *et al.* (2015) and Jaros (2010) which have been carried out in Kenya on implementation of change. Aghere (2015) in his study noted employee relations for further examination as human resource factors influencing organizational change. This study therefore seeks to ascertain the role of human resource management function on implementation of change among county governments with reference to Kakamega County.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study was to establish the role of human resource management function on implementation of change among county governments, focusing in particular on Kakamega County. The specific objectives were:

- To investigate the role of employee relations practices on change implementation in Kakamega County
- To establish the role of employee training on change implementation in Kakamega County

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Models and Theories

The models and theories discussed hereunder are directly linked to the variables relating to implementation of change. They include Lewin's change management model, the ADKAR model for change, Human Capital theory and Social Exchange theory. They are meant to describe and simplify the process of change.

Kurt Lewin's Change Management Model

Many organizations have used Kurt Lewin's theory to understand human behaviour as it relates to change and patterns of resistance to change. Also referred to as Lewin's Force Field Analysis, the model encompasses three distinct phases known as unfreezing, moving and freezing or refreezing (Spector, 2014).

The three phases of change begin with unfreezing. This phase is aimed at de-stabilising the equilibrium through a reduction in the field forces that maintain an existing organizational culture and method of operation. Unfreezing often involves breaking psychological attachment to the past by using information that demonstrates the existence of problems (Graetz, 2011). The key

here is to explain to people why the existing way needs to be changes and how change can bring about profit. The second step of the model is moving or changing. This phase entails the creation of recognition in the workforce of the need for change (Swanson & Creed, 2013), accounting for all the forces at work, and identifying and evaluating, iteratively, the available options. This action research-based learning approach enables groups and individuals to move to a more acceptable set of behaviors (Burnes, 2004) around a particular set of new structures and processes. The third is refreezing, which occurs as soon as new values, structures and processes have been installed, and is required in order to lock in the change (McAleese, Creed & Zutshi, 2013). Communication and time thus are key for this stage to take place successfully.

Lewin underlines the importance of group decision making in encouraging and sustaining change as part of the refreezing process. He argues that, although discussion during the process could lead people to question and change their behavior; unfreezing and moving, making decisions as part of a democratic group has a refreezing effect that sustains the decision (Burnes & Cook 2012). Group decision-making provides the cultural reinforcement necessary to stabilize the system to restore equilibrium (Graetz, 2011). Most individuals and practicing managers tend to agree that predictable work patterns, stable expectations, and foreseeable outcomes are to be preferred. However, the rise of hyper competitiveness in a globally interconnected series of markets and supply chains does appear to challenge the ideal of stability for many organizations (Wright, Paroutis & Blettner, 2013).

Lewin's change model is essential in this study as it identifies factors that would impede change from occurring; forces that oppose change often called retraining or static forces that promote or

drive change, referred to as 'driving forces' (Spector, 2014). The county governments fully understand what behaviours drive or oppose change then work to strengthen the positive driving forces, change can occur successfully.

The ADKAR model for Change

The ADKAR model developed by Hiatt (1998) is a framework for understanding change at an individual level. This model is then extended to show how businesses, government agencies and communities can increase the likelihood that their changes are implemented successfully. While many change management projects focus on the steps necessary for organizational change, ADKAR emphasizes that successful organizational change occurs only when each person is able to transition successfully (Connelly, 2012). The model focuses on five actions i.e. Awareness of the need for change, desire to support and participate in the change, knowledge of how to change, ability to implement the change and reinforcement to sustain the change. Hiatt refers to each of the five actions as building blocks for successful individual change, and therefore successful organizational change. Each step must be completed before moving on the next. Hiatt emphasizes that it is not possible to achieve success in one area unless the previous action has been addressed.

The elements of the ADKAR model fall into the natural order of how one person experiences change. Desire cannot come before awareness because it is the awareness of the need for change that stimulates our desire or triggers our resistance to that change. Knowledge cannot come before desire because we do not seek to know how to do something that we do not want to do. Ability cannot come before knowledge because we cannot implement what we do not know. Reinforcement cannot come before ability because we can only recognize and appreciate what has been achieved (Muala, 2013).

The lifecycle for ADKAR begins after a change has been identified. From this starting point, the model provides a framework and sequence for managing the people side of change. In the workplace, ADKAR provides a solid foundation for change management activities, including readiness assessments, sponsorship, communications, coaching, training, recognition, and resistance management.

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory developed by Smith (1776) and re-invigorated by Schultz, (1961) who postulates that training and education are a form of investment in human beings. The underlying belief then is that training creates assets in the form of knowledge and skills, which in turn increases the productivity of the worker. Schultz argued that skilled human resource has been able to acquire these skills as a result of training and development programs or investment in the existing human resource through appropriate on-the job training both within and outside the organization for example seminars, workshops, conferences, and by creating conducive environment through appropriate welfare care like promotion.

According to Flamholtz & Lacey (1981) human capital theory proposes that people's skills, experience, and knowledge are a form of capital and that returns are earned from investments made by the employer or employee to develop these attributes. The Human capital theory holds that employees should invest in specific training and further initiation of more promotion opportunities to enhance employees' career path prospects. Thus, the human capital perspective at the level of the organizations, due to its emphasis on skills and performance, appears to offer more support for generalized investments in the human resources (Armstrong, 2006).

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is a sociological theory which was initially developed to analyze the people's social behavior in terms of exchange of resources. The theory posits that people get involved in social exchange because of scarcity of resources, thus needing input from other parties (Ali, 2013). It also depicts numerous interpersonal transactions that occur throughout a person's social life. Blau defines social exchange as voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others. On the other hand, Nammir *et al.* (2012) describes it as a frame for expounding exchanges of resources, in market conditions via social process.

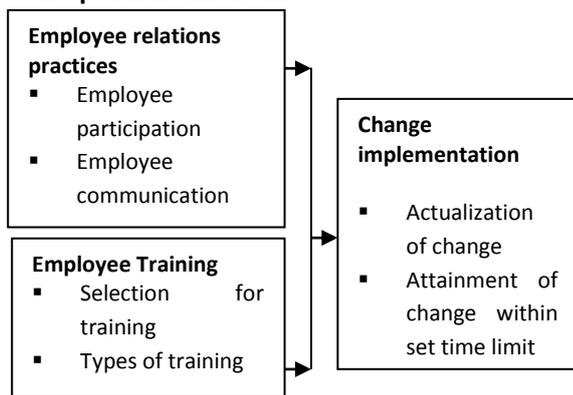
According to Holthausen (2013) SET makes assumptions in two fields. Firstly regarding human nature and secondly the quality of relationships. It assumes that relationships are interdependent. Both participants are actively involved in the relationship as giver and receiver. Further more both parties should be able to see something, meaning benefits, in order to feel an obligation to reciprocate (Schroeder & Ali, 2013). Individuals may form economic exchange and social exchange relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Comparing social exchange relationship with economic exchange one, individuals in the former type tend to display more effective work behaviors than do those in the latter type (Settoon *et al.*, 1996).

Based on the study of Lavelle, individuals may build a social exchange relationship with the organization as a whole or with their leader. Guided by social exchange relationships, employees will develop a strong level of mutual support with their organization or leader, and that may lead to effective work behavior, such as better work performance and giving more help to

their colleagues as high levels of social exchanges are related to high citizenship behavior (Estad *et al.*, 2011). Even though, SET is helpful in analyzing people's social behavior in terms of exchange of resources in an incremental way the theory itself is very broad. The breadth of the theory is considered as an umbrella for concepts such as need of resources, reciprocity, rational actors, trust, interdependence, power, restricted social exchange, generalized social exchange, long-term relations, and cultural similarity (Ali, 2013).

The social exchange theory has much to offer to the understanding of directional relationships i.e. employee/organization, employee/supervisor and employee co-worker relationships and to possible motives as to why individuals actively participate in change and form positive change evaluations.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables Dependent Variable
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Employee Relations Practices

Employee relations, according to Armstrong (2010) consist of all those factors of human resource management involving relationships with employees either directly or through collective agreements in which trade unions are recognized. On the other hand, behaviour and structure are intertwined as people go through a socialization process and become dependent of the existing social structures, yet at the same time

social structures are altered by their activities. This implies that social structures are the medium of human activities as well as the result of those activities (Indeje & Zheng, 2012).

The purpose of employee relations is generally to ensure that the organization has a work force whose psychological state supports the objectives being pursued by the organization itself (Chidi *et al.*, 2011). The components of employee relations have been identified by researchers to include institutional relations, health, and employment security, employee safety, working conditions and support to employees on non-work problems (Schlechter *et al.*, 2015).

Relations are developed and maintained by the people through the skill of communication and the strength of these relations depends on the ability to communicate between the sides Paracha *et al.* (2013). Because businesses are composed of individuals, an escalating need exists to develop organizational change communication strategies emphasizing employee participation (Shin, Taylor and Seo, 2012). Nordin (2014) adds that though organizational change poses challenges, understanding the multidimensional processes of effective organizational change communication could lead to successful change strategies and techniques to mitigate resistance to organizational change. However, Kupritz & Cowell (2010) posits that a divergence exists concerning the frequency and level of communication shared with employees and proper delivery modalities. Effective communication between a superior and a subordinate at the workplace is another important facet of organizations. Regular and direct communication is a valuable characteristic of any organization and has been endorsed as especially important for organizational performance (Vredenburg, 2012). Moreover, open communication makes employees feel less nervous about raising and discussing transformation issues with their supervisors

(Cigularov & Chen *et al.*, 2010). Consequently, open communication and frequent interactions between employees and managers favor change implementation.

According to Shaed and Ishak *et al.* (2015) employee participation is distribution of power between employer and employee in decision making process, either through direct or indirect involvement. Consequently, Malek *et al.* (2012) emphasizes that participation is regarded as a key success factor during organizational change. Communication can break down when employees are not involved in the change process. Indeed, involving employees from start to finish in any program has always been considered as a good management practice.

According to Irawanto (2015) participation increases employee motivation, job satisfaction and successful teamwork with supervisor will increase as well because there is less conflict and more commitment and at last organizational change is better accepted. Consequently, participation can increase social interactions, discussions and support innovations (Zubair, Bashir & Baig *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore participatory process increases employees' perceived ownership of change, thus helping to ensure implementation (Nielsen & Randall, 2012). Change will be more effective when organizations bring employees into planning and organizing the process. Moreover, employees who have helped plan and implement the change will embrace it rather than resist it (Malek *et al.*, 2012).

Employee Training

Training is viewed as an activity undertaken by organizations aimed at providing a learning experience to employees, and the intended outcome is a permanent change in employees with regard to performance on the job (Degraft, 2012). Paracha and Rubina *et al.* (2013) define training as the process of educating new skills and

then strengthening those skills and adds that change is more accepted by employees when they are at ease with their level of proficiency of their new skills. It must be perceived as a positive process which anticipates trends and future changes.

On the other hand, in a study by Ongori and Nzonzo (2011) training is considered as the process of upgrading the knowledge, developing skills, bringing about attitude and behavioural change, and improving the ability of trainee to perform tasks effectively and efficiently in organizations. However, Nassazi (2013) while differentiating training, learning, development and education, posits that training is more focused on preparing a person for a specific occupation that requires specific skills to have it done to perfection.

According to Abbas *et al.* (2014) in an investigation on different factors influencing perceived organizational change, found out that there is positive and meaningful relationship between perceived change and training where training explains approximately 57% of organizational change. Consequently Paracha *et al.* (2013) posits that for successful implementation of infrastructure change, training is essential. Inadequate training often results in hindrance in change management efforts. Paracha *et al.*'s views are supported by Mou (2013) who adds that the obstacles that organizations face in the implementation of change improvements are more related to the lack of training for the employees.

Training and development programs play a vital role in every organization. According to Sean (2010) training helps to identify and grow the personality and performance strengths that will make the organization's employees better and getting right person in the right job. Continuous training keeps employees at the cutting edge of

industry developments. Kulkarni (2013) adds that it helps managers to evaluate the job performance and accordingly take decisions on succession planning, employee retention and motivation. Andrade *et al.* (2016) concludes that training is an extremely important aspect of the change implementation process, but often is mishandled during a transformation. Hence, it is responsible for the failure of much of the organizational changes. Consequently, Training is considered an element of good management practice and organizations that ignore it appear disadvantaged and less competitive in market they are operating in (Degraft, 2012).

Training has to be designed in such a way that it imparts the requisite skills, attitudes, knowledge and social behaviors to the employees, and in totality, training can be viewed as improvement of performance at the individual and organizational level through learning a set of skills and knowledge designed to improve performance (Ozioma *et al.*, 2014). The improvement of performance at the individual or organizational level is a measurable construct that organizations can use to determine the value addition nature of the training that has been undertaken by an organization (Ivancevich, 2010).

Selection for training can be done on the basis of information gathered through training needs analysis which is done both on the organization and individual employees. Individual or person analysis helps identify who needs training based on performance deficiencies that result from lack of knowledge, skills or attitude required in respect to the important changes taking place in the organization (Martin, 2014). The person analysis process should not only consider current training needs, but also should identify training and development strategies that will help the individual to achieve expected performance standards that are important to the organizational goals (Arshad *et al.*, 2015). During the

identification of training needs, there is need to create, develop, maintain and improve any systems relevant in contributing to the availability of people with required skills. The training programme, content and the trainees chosen depend on the objectives of the training programme (Nassazi, 2013).

There are many methods of training employees in organization. The range of training methods used has been expanded by the application of technology in its hard and soft approaches and can generally be categorized as either on the job or off the job (Ongori *et al.*, 2011). Examples of the on-the-job training include but not limited to job rotations and transfers, coaching and mentoring. On the other hand, off-the-job training examples include conferences, role playing and many more (Nassazi, 2013). Milhem *et al.* (2014) concurs with Ongori & Nassazi. He adds that OJT is planned, structured, and mostly carried out in the work place during the working day while OFTJ which is the most common type of training is carried out off-site and off-line. Khan *et al.* (2011) on the other hand posits that OJT helps employees to get the knowledge of their job in a better way. In addition, Kwena (2013) in a study of Kenya's Ministries found that the capacity and technical know how was low due to lack of training and hurried implementation of systems. He recommended on-the-job training for users in order to improve their skills and capacity to use systems.

Implementation of Change

The study of organizational change implementation has attracted a lot of attention in the developed countries as increasing competition compels organizations to find ways of staying ahead of competition (Denning, 2010). Organizational change is not a new thing and the changes that are taking place in the context of organizations presently are not similar past

occurrences, and executives have cause to worry, recent studies indicate that there is limited capacity in most organizations to enable them develop a successful organizational change implementation program (Grol *et al.*, 2013). The obstacles encountered in the implementation improvements in change in organizations are among others associated with lack of training for employees and unfavorable motivational factors, lack of quality work life and difficulties with new technologies (Higgs *et al.*, 2011, Mou, 2013).

According to Alloggio *et al.* (2013) implementation of an organizational change creates processes that are not perfect due to complexities of the processes, which may be uncertain and discontinuous. Andrade & Abuguergue *et al.* (2016) adds that implementation of the change management process is not complicated, but you should not expect its implementation from day to night. There is need to adapt the process to the culture and maturity of the company, requiring dedication, commitment and effort of everyone involved, so that we can break resistance and paradigms related to change with the use of the process (Andrade *et al.*, (2016). Jaros (2010) argues that in order for organizations to not just survive but prosper, they must be knowledgeable about 'how to implement appropriate organizational changes that will be embraced by their employees' unfortunately, successful organizational change efforts are 'rare', with most failing to fulfill their promise. Namoso (2013) adds that organizations should embrace modern technology which makes implementation, organizational support of change easy and fun.

According to Braden (2016) for successful change implementation in organizations, the components of Change Planning, Change Leadership, Change Management and Change Maintenance must be incorporated. Identifying and indicating 'who will do what,' 'how,' and 'by when' before embarking on change will ensure that change is successfully

implemented. Shea, Jacobs and Esserman *et al.* (2014) concurs with Braden and explains that implementation capability depends in part on knowing what courses of action are necessary, what kinds of resources are needed, how much time is needed, and how activities should be sequenced. The organizational members consider situational factors such as, for example, whether sufficient time exists to implement the change well or whether the internal political environment supports implementation. Alani *et al.* (2016) proposes gradual introduction of change to give workers opportunity for adjustment by allowing a time frame for complete shift to allay fears, anxiety and panic that may grip employees.

A project bringing about radical changes over a brief period of time usually require changes of staff by way of employment (Circic & Rakovic *et al.*, 2010). If the timescale is longer, and the changes are still extensive and far reaching, it is necessary to re-engineer the business in order to secure the possibilities of the new system and sufficient time for up-skilling of the existing staff. If the changes are incremental, their implementation implies providing a longer time period (Circic *et al.*, 2010).

The human resources are the key resource for any organization big or small, and the success of an organization is dependent on the quality of creativity and innovativeness of the employees (Smith *et al.*, 2011). This study has analyzed four aspects of human resource concerned with employee relations, employee training, employee performance and management and organizational support, and all of these are key factors that influence predisposition of the employees in organizational change implementation (Barzekar *et al.*, 2014).

Empirical Review of the Study

According to D' Ortenzio (2012) in a study to understand change and change management processes conducted at grassroots level research

that took six years, collected data related to changes that the organization was undergoing and how the changes were being implemented as well as the influence that the changes were having on the employees. He found that understanding the dynamics between the existence of organizational change and the employees is an important factor to policy makers and that little evidence was available to support the positive or negative aspects of change and change management from the employee's point of view, the study demonstrated that the need for public sector employees to have a buy-in or a voice in change and change management processes and practices that affect them at a personal and professional level is critical (D'Ortenzio, 2012).

In another study Doorewaard *et al.* (2014) investigated the contribution of human resource management to organizational change, and noted the necessity of human resource sensitization to the emotional sub-factors entwined in organizational change and proposed cultivation of an empathic and respectful approach to human resource management in the implementation of change. Tumelo (2015) evaluated the critical factors of change management at a passenger rail agency and noted that leaders who are conscious of their power bases and manage them effectively are able to perpetuate successful approaches fundamental to organization change implementation.

In an investigation on the factors affecting management of change in the road agencies in Kenya, Chepkorir (2013) found that cost of services had significant effect on management of change. Ogilvie (2015) reviewed the role of human resource in change conversation with historical perspective and concluded that human resource is in a position to facilitate change and ethical role in organizational change implementation. Arvin (2014) investigated organizational change during knowledge

management implementation and noted that motivation through commitment was the most preferred factor in change management.

Lastly, Wageeh (2014) assessed employee attitudes towards organizational commitment and change at King Faisal Hospital in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the study looked at the linkage between employees attitudes towards organizational commitment and change, the findings indicated differences among the three groups of employees with regard to attitudes towards organizational commitment and change, the findings further showed that there is significant association between organizational commitment and change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted a case study design for this particular study which according to Kothari (2006) is a way of organizing data and looking at the object to be studied as a whole, a case study makes a detailed examination of a single subject or a group of phenomena. The research focused on a population target of 3305 CGK employees which was stratified into different cadres used to generate the results of the study. Therefore the sampling frame was 3305 employees of Kakamega County. The research used simple random sampling technique which ensured that each member of the population had an equal chance of being included in the sample.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher generated questionnaires as the major tool of collecting primary data which enabled the respondents to obtain clarification concerning the questions (Kothari, 2004). The study also adopted structured (closed-ended) and unstructured (open-ended) questionnaires that captured the various variables of the study and the likert scale used to allow for consistency and ease of answering.

The researcher used the pick and drop method to administer the questionnaires to 33 respondents

of the sample size to Cooper and Schindler (2005), who posits that as a rule of thumb, 1% of the sample should constitute the pilot test. The researcher assessed the reliability of the questionnaires through use of Cronbach's Alpha, a technique of estimating reliability that does not require either splitting of a scale or the subjects retaking the test for a given construct.

The researcher sought assistance from her supervisor to assess the relevance of the content in the research tools against the objectives of the study. The suggestions from the supervisor were used to improve the clarity of the items on the questionnaires used in this study.

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data analysis putting in mind Hussey & Hussey (1997) remarks which state that if one has collected mainly quantitative data, they need to conduct some form of statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean and percentages was used to present the responses obtained from the respondents.

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

This data was collected by the researcher who directly administered the questionnaires to the respondents and collected the questionnaires. A total of 331 questionnaires were distributed. Three hundred questionnaires were returned filled by the respondents representing a 90.6% response rate. A pilot study was undertaken on 33 employees of County Government of Kakamega. Reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated through administration of the said instrument to the pilot group. In order to establish the validity of study variables, tests of sampling adequacy were used. This enabled the study identify whether the items were appropriate for further analysis.

The background information of the respondents was included in the research study due to its significance in describing the respondent's characteristics. Gender of the respondents was a

key demographic characteristic of measure in the study. Most of the respondents were male (62.67%) while female respondents were 37.33% of the study sample. The gender distribution was representative of the labour force in Kakamega County where most of the workers were male compared to females.

The study sought to establish the representation of the respondents on their level of management. Findings showed that top management represented 2% of the respondents, senior management were 6.6%, supervisors at 11.67% while majority of the respondents were junior technical staff members at 79.67%. The distribution is also in line with the normal staff establishment at the county government headquarters. The research sought to find out the length of time workers had been in their current position. The information captured the frequency of upward mobility in job groups at the county government of Kakamega. Majority of the respondents (65%) had been working in their current job cadres for over 4 years. Only 24% has been in their job cadres for between 2 to 3 years while a paltry 11% of the respondents had worked in their current level for less than a year. The study also sought to establish the average length of time that employees had worked for the county government. 7% of the respondents had worked for the county government for less than a year while 33% have worked for about 3 years. However, majority of the respondents (60%) have worked for over 4 years.

On the highest level of academic qualifications attained, majority of the respondents were diploma holders (34%) followed by degree holders (32%). Those with Ordinary level of education comprised 30% of the respondents consisting of KCPE and KCSE/KCE level of education.

Employee Relations Practices

To determine employee relations practices, a set of eight statements were formulated. The

respondents were asked to indicate the extent of agreement with each of the Employee relations practices statements. It was established that majority of respondent (84.0%) were in agreement that they were allowed to be identified to organizational unions to enable them to communicate their concerns during change of which 33(11%) agreed and 219(73%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.4233 and Standard deviation of 1.11126. Similarly, majority of the respondents (92.0%) confirmed that the county government had developed mechanisms to ensure proper communication delivery modalities in change management of which 61(20.3%) agreed and 215(71.7%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.5833 and standard deviation of .80325.

It was further established that majority of respondent (67.0%) were in agreement that supervisor and employees had regular, direct and open communications as pertain assignments on change initiatives of which 81(27%) agreed and 120(40%) strongly agreed with a mean of 3.8367 and Standard deviation of 1.21995. Also, majority of the respondents (70.7%) confirmed that communication modalities adopted by the county government were appropriate and effective during change management processes of which 40(13.3%) agreed and 172(57.3%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.0933 and standard deviation of 1.20393.

Also, that majority of respondent (87.7%) were in agreement that supervisor actively seeks employees input concerning challenges, expectations and innovations during change of which 60(20%) agreed and 203(67.7%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.5133 and Standard deviation of 0.82791. In regard to participation, majority of the respondents (90.7%) confirmed that they participated in implementation of change programmes from start to finish of which 98(32.7%) agreed and 174(58%) strongly agreed

with a mean of 4.4067 and standard deviation of 0.88160.

On informal interaction, majority of respondent (86.3%) were in agreement that events that encouraged informal interaction between their seniors, themselves and other employees in times of change were organised of which 73(24.3%) agreed and 186(62%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.3300 and Standard deviation of 1.08244. Lastly, majority of the respondents (76.0%) confirmed that they were encouraged to work in teams organised for the purpose of implementation of change initiatives of which 40(13.3%) agreed and 188(62.7%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.2800 and standard deviation of 1.06711.

From the open ended statement in the questionnaire, the respondents revealed that employee relation during change implementation could be improved by good flow of information holding meetings at departmental level, sensitization exercises, employee involvement, communication channels, team work, communication skills, employee feedback, building strong teams and brainstorming sessions. Majority of the respondents suggested that employee involvement in decision making, team work, and communication was key for change implementation in Kakamega County.

Employee Training

To measure determine, a set of eight statements were formulated. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of agreement with each of the Employee Training statements. From the findings, it was revealed that majority of respondent (81.3%) were in agreement that they had systems and structures that ensured that they were selected to receive appropriate training during change periods of which 98(32.7%) agreed and 146(48.7%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.2333 and Standard deviation of 0.92108. Similarly,

majority of the respondents (90.3%) confirmed that their supervisor engaged them in TNA to determine their knowledge, skills and attitudes required in respect of important changes taking place in the county of which 48(16%) agreed and 223(74.3%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.5800 and standard deviation of .87147.

Regarding supervisor recommending employees for training whenever they had to undertake a new assignment as regards change, majority of respondent (80.7%) were in agreement of which 102(34%) agreed and 140(46.7%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.2067 and Standard deviation of 0.92021. Also, majority of the respondents (86.0%) confirmed that both Off-the job and On-the job types of training were at their disposal when undertaking a new assignment as pertains change of which 76(25.3%) agreed and 182(60.7%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.3667 and standard deviation of 0.97058.

On type of training used, that majority of respondent (91.7%) were in agreement that the type of training used was effective during change management of which 101(33.7%) agreed and 174(58%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.4400 and standard deviation of .81770. Further, majority of the respondents (69.0%) confirmed that during change management processes at Kakamega county, the type of training given covered all required areas of the change programme of which 122(40.7%) agreed and 85(28.3%) strongly agreed with a mean of 3.9200 and standard deviation of .88101.

On county government had taken necessary measures to develop programmes relevant to types of training offered during change initiatives, majority of respondent (82.7%) of change were organised of which 80(26.7%) agreed and 168(56%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.3333 and standard deviation of 0.90089 . Finally, majority of the respondents (93.3%) confirmed that county government engaged external

consultants with extensive experience in public sector as training facilitators during change of which 101(33.7%) agreed and 179(59.7%) strongly agreed with a mean of 4.4767 and standard deviation of 0.79049.

Further, the results from open ended question revealed that for change implementation to improved, training and development should involve consultants/stakeholders, timely training, hold meetings with stakeholders, training needs analysis, training in relevant fields, rotational training, specialization of training, equal opportunity for all when training, training consultancy, decentralization of training and implement training projections. Most of the respondents suggested that there was a training needs analysis, involvement of consultants and equal training opportunities for all.

Implementation of change

To measure determine, a set of eight statements were formulated. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of agreement with each of the implementation statements. Majority of respondent 264(88%) strongly agree that Change initiative usually gave rise to desired results and further 32(10.7%) agreed with a mean of 4.8667 and standard deviation of 0.37775. Similarly, majority of respondent 260(86.7%) strongly agreed that change initiatives objectives were always realised and further 36(12%) agreed with a mean of 4.8533 and standard deviation of .39029.

Regarding systems and processes being altered in line with the new change initiatives, 244(81.3%) strongly agreed and 52(17.3%) agreed with a mean of 4.8000 and standard deviation of .43277. Also, majority of respondent as shown 227(75.7%) strongly agreed that the employees were motivated to achieve change initiative results irrespective of whether the results were small or wide ranging and further 60(20%) agreed with a mean of 4.7133 and standard deviation of .54049.

In addition, majority of respondent 240(80%) strongly agreed that change management program milestones were allocated adequate time and further 44(14.7%) agreed with a mean of 4.7200 and standard deviation of .64523. Similarly, majority of respondent 206(68.7%) strongly agreed that staff acquire new skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for implementation of change within the change time frame and further 90(30%) agreed with a mean of 4.6733 and standard deviation of .49744.

In relation to change management milestones are realised on time, 64(21.3%) strongly agreed and 96(32%) agreed with a mean of 3.7467 and standard deviation of .78605. Lastly, majority of respondent 203(67.7%) strongly agreed that the staff involved in change exercise meet their change targets on time and further 52(17.3%) agreed with a mean of 4.4300 and standard deviation of .99418.

The respondents revealed that successful implementation of change projects within Kakamega County had been due to monitoring and evaluation, efficiency, setting of achievable targets, employee commitment, technological know-how, employee recruitment and selection, employee rewards, team work, gradual implementation of change, employee empowerment, regular review of change management tools and communication upgrade communication channels. Further, majority of respondents suggested that employee rewards and compensation, monitoring and evaluation, training and team work were attributed to the success of change implementation within County Government of Kakamega.

The results from open ended questions also revealed that other factors that influenced implementation of change in County Government of Kakamega included managerial support, commitment, awareness, attitude and motivation, employee recruitment and selection, employee

reward and compensation, employee motivation, performance appraisal, organizational leadership, organizational structure and organizational culture. However, majority of respondents suggested that employee reward and compensation, employee motivation, and employee motivation were the main factors that influence change implementation.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Findings

Employee relations practices

The role of employee relations practices was conceptualized using eight statements. The researcher asked respondents to rate the statement provided based on a Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. Results obtained from correlation analysis revealed that there existed a weak positive relationship between employee relations practices and change implementation in Kakamega County. Hence employee relations practices had moderate role on change implementation.

Employee training

The researcher established the role of employee training on change implementation in Kakamega County. The researcher asked respondents to rate the statement provided based on a Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. Correlation analysis results revealed that there was a positive and strong relationship between employee training and change implementation in Kakamega County. This implied that employee training had big role on change implementation.

Conclusions

Employee relations practices

Research findings revealed that employee relations practices had moderate role on the change implementation in Kakamega County. The roles identified by majority of the respondents included teamwork, organizational unions and proper communication delivery modalities leading to Kakamega County change management program milestones been allocated inadequate time. Further, majority of the respondents also agreed on their participation in implementation of change programmes from start to finish.

Employee training

Based on research findings, employee training had big role on change implementation in Kakamega County. Majority of the respondents agreed that they were external consultants who were used as training facilitators during change, the county government has developed relevant programmes for training offered during change initiatives and the supervisors had been found to recommend for training on new assignments regarding change. This had led to Kakamega County staff acquire new skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for implementation of change within the change time frame.

Recommendations for Practice

Employee relations practices

The county governments should allow employees to participate fully in the change implementation. This can be done through involving of

organizational union thereby the views and opinion of the employees toward change implementation are known to the management.

The study recommended that there was need for improved communication amongst different stakeholders involved in change implementation. This would results to increased employee relation practices

Employee training

The study recommended that staff to acquire new skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for implementation of change, there was need for organization to select training types that were suited for a particular change implementation project undertaken by the organization

Suggestions for Further Studies

This research adopted a descriptive case design. The researcher therefore recommends other researchers to use descriptive survey so as to find out other factors that have role on implementation of change.

The used questionnaire as tool for collection of data, further studies should employ use of FGDs and interview that would enable the researcher to collect qualitative data for the purpose of triangulation of the findings.

This study focused on establishing role of human resource management function on implementation of change. More research needs to be done on the challenges which were encountered when implementing the change programmes especially in county Governments.

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